



# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NORTHEAST REGION  
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

September 2006

**GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930**

## **EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT PROGRAM STREAMLINED**

The Habitat Conservation Division has developed a Programmatic Consultation (PC) and General Concurrence (GC) for the Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) program in the Northeast Region. EFP's are issued by NMFS to allow an applicant to perform temporary fishing activities which would normally be prohibited under a Fishery Management Plan. These activities are usually for the purpose of research and furthering management efficiency. The PC and GC will allow consultation of EFP's to be expedited as long as they meet certain fish habitat protection criteria. The development of the Programmatic Consultation and General Concurrence will allow for quicker processing of permit applications, and reduce demand and time of staff resources required in both the Habitat and Sustainable Fisheries Divisions.

**([Marcy.Scott@noaa.gov](mailto:Marcy.Scott@noaa.gov), 978/ 281-9108)**

## **AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY MEETING**

David Stevenson attended the 136th annual American Fisheries Society meeting in Lake Placid, NY September 10-14, and presented a talk entitled "Putting the H in EFH: Revising Essential Fish Habitat Designations in the Northeast U.S." The talk was part of a symposium that addressed current and future fishery management activities in the Northeast region under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Co-authors were Leslie-Ann McGee and Tyler Hautaniemi of the New England Fishery Management Council. The talk described the legislative and regulatory basis for essential fish habitat designations and the new methods that have been developed to revise the existing EFH designations for federally-managed species in the region. The original designations relied primarily on maps based on catch rates derived from NMFS trawl survey data. The new methods involve the use of spatially-explicit features of marine habitats (depth, bottom temperature, and substrate), in addition to trawl survey data, to map and describe EFH.

**([David.Stevenson@noaa.gov](mailto:David.Stevenson@noaa.gov), 978/ 281-9118)**

**JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732**

### **JAMES J. HOWARD LABORATORY OPEN HOUSE**

Staff from the Sandy Hook field office participated in our Northeast Fisheries Science Center's James J. Howard Marine Sciences Laboratory open house on September 29 and 30. Students, several from schools throughout the state, and weekend visitors to Sandy Hook were able learn about the lab's ongoing research, hear presentations from center staff, view fish caught off the Jersey Shore, and see an eelway in action. For the children, there were touch tanks, face painting, arts and crafts, and games. Captain Fish, a NOAA Fisheries mascot, was also on hand to visit with the kids. Students from the Marine Academy of Science and Technology based on Sandy Hook volunteered to help with the children's activities. Staff from the National Park Service, the New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium, and the American Littoral Society also had displays. On Saturday, the Sandy Hook Lighthouse, the oldest continuously operation lighthouse in the country, was open to the public as well. ([Karen.Greene@noaa.gov](mailto:Karen.Greene@noaa.gov), 732/ 872-3023)

### **OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION**

HCD staff reviewed and prepared comments for the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for the License Renewal of Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station, located in Ocean County, New Jersey. Comments were sent to NOAA for incorporation of an agency response to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The purpose of the GEIS is to evaluate an application by AmerGen, LLC to renew the operating license for an additional 20 years. ([Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov](mailto:Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov), 732/ 872-3037)

### **MILFORD FIELD OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460**

### **RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT**

Long time Habitat Conservation Division staffer Mike Ludwig has retired from the National Marine Fisheries Service after 30+ years of federal service. During Mike's tenure with NMFS, he became a well respected fixture assessing resource impact levels and providing advice on a wide diversity of coastal development issues. His initial investigations for NMFS focused on the impacts of the Hudson River power plants on fishery resources; he was also the lead NMFS biologist in the infamous "Miller Highway" [Westway] replacement project along lower Manhattan's shoreline and subsequent Hudson River Park development nearly 20 years ago. While his attention primarily was focused on projects in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New York, Mike's expertise also was tapped in the environmental review of projects in many other regions of the U.S. and even beyond. In particular, Mike's international experience included serving as staff coordinator to the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans regarding the commercial use and navigation of Passamaquoddy Bay on the Bay of Fundy associated with the proposed petroleum refinery in Eastport, Maine. Not one for letting any algae grow under his boots, Mike won't be spending his retirement idly, and already has logged his first day in the private sector. We miss his many contributions to the Habitat Conservation Division and wish him well in his new pursuits. ([Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov](mailto:Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

### **OFFSHORE ISLAND PROPOSED BY ATLANTIC SEA ISLAND GROUP**

Staff from the Milford and Sandy Hook field offices received initial review materials from the U.S. Coast Guard describing an application by Atlantic Sea Island group, LLC to own, construct, and operate a deepwater port in federal waters off of the City of Long Beach, New York. The project entails construction of an island that would support liquid natural gas (LNG) storage and regasification facilities, a port terminal to accommodate vessels transporting LNG from its place of origin, and related appurtenances. LNG plant operations would be undertaken under the name Safe Harbor Energy. Our review is at a very preliminary stage which entails making a completeness assessment on the materials. Comments will be forwarded to Headquarters and combined there with those of other programs for a NOAA response. [Karen.Greene@noaa.gov](mailto:Karen.Greene@noaa.gov), 732/ 872-3000 or [Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov](mailto:Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

#### **POTENTIAL PERSONAL WATERCRAFT USE EVALUATED AT GATEWAY**

The National Park Service (NPS) is evaluating a range of alternatives and strategies for the management of personal watercraft (PWC) use at Gateway National Recreation Area (Gateway). To this end, the NPS has prepared a draft environmental assessment and a draft special regulation that potentially would authorize PWC use within portions of Gateway. Staff from the Milford field office received the relevant review materials and will provide comments in October. ([Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov](mailto:Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov), 203/ 882-6504)

#### **CHESAPEAKE BAY FIELD OFFICE, 410 SEVERN AVE, SUITE 107A, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21403**

#### **U.S. 301 – Waldorf, Maryland Area; Principals (+ 1) Meeting**

The Streamlined NEPA/404 review process continued for the U.S. 301 Waldorf, MD area study, a major multi-modal transportation study that will affect two major watersheds in Charles County, MD: Mattawoman Creek and Zekiah Swamp, both important spawning grounds for anadromous fish. The Principals (+1) Kickoff Meeting was held on September 5, 2006, which brought federal/state management personnel together to address critical study elements and unresolved issues that have been raised by the field office staff review. Agreement on several issues was achieved during the meeting, including: 1) general approval of the study's Purpose and Need Statement; 2) elimination of a transit-only alternative from the study; and 3) agreement on extending the U.S. 301 Study Area south into La Plata, MD to ascertain that the alternative selected for Waldorf will not adversely affect La Plata traffic in the future. Future topics for upcoming Principals meetings will include a closer look at Bus Rapid Transit as a complementary component of a study solution for Waldorf, as well as incorporating existing state/federal resource protection programs (e.g., Maryland Green Infrastructure Program and EPA Green Highways Program) into the study process for ensuring protection of the affected watersheds. ([John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV](mailto:John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV), 410/ 267-5675)